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I. THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON.

“WHATSOEVER is spoken of God, or things pertaining to God, otherwise than the truth is, though it seem an honor, it is an injury. And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed, lest, in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.”¹

Thus wrote wise old Richard Hooker some three hundred years ago. And multiplied experience since his day has fully endorsed his observations. Nothing has ever been gained by the friends of the Bible by the assumption of false or unnecessary positions, and at the present critical stage of the battle for and against the supremacy of God’s word, much, very much, is to be lost by such manœuvering. History abundantly shows how bad tactics, the deep and continuous error of Christian apologetics, has once and again compelled retreat before the sharp onslaughts of the foe, with confusion, and doubt, and dismay as the results. Inexcusably, often, has the Bible been put in a false place by “attributing to it more than it can have.” Subsequent defenders have always felt the serious disadvantage of the well-meant but ruinous policy. Finding themselves at the very outset in an untenable position, their first move was necessarily a retreat, to their own discomfiture and the jubilation of their opponents. We are even now learning something of the risk involved in relying upon argu-

¹ *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book II., Section 8.

V. "THE MIND OF THE MASTER."

BY IAN MACLAREN.

AMONG the distinguished foreigners who have visited America during the past few months, none have received a more cordial welcome in literary and religious circles than Rev. John Maclaren Watson, D. D., pastor of Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool. His manager claims that he was more in demand than any other lecturer from abroad has ever been. Although born on English soil, Dr. Watson is of Scotch parentage, and received his education in Scotland, being a graduate of Edinburgh University, where he is said to have been a diligent and successful student. Belonging to the Free Church, he took his theological course at New College, Edinburgh, where he had among his intimate friends such men as Dr. George Adam Smith, Dr. James Stalker, Rev. D. M. Ross, and Prof. Henry Drummond. His first ministerial work was in connection with Barclay Church, Edinburgh, where he served for a term as assistant pastor. He then received a call to the Free Church of Logiealmond, Perthshire, better known by the fictitious name he has conferred upon it, Drumtochty, a church consisting of only about one hundred members. From this place he was called by an influential Glasgow church, St. Matthews, to be colleague to the venerable Dr. Samuel Miller. There he did excellent work, and his reputation as a preacher steadily grew. Then came the call from the congregation over which he now presides. Dr. Watson's reputation, however, has not been made so much through the pulpit as through his pen. The surest and shortest cut to literary fame in our day is offered by fiction. Ours is distinctly a fiction-loving age. The author who puts his message on almost any subject in the form of an attractive story is sure of a wide circle of readers. The appearance of his book, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, introduced the provincial Scotch preacher to the English-speaking world, and gave him an assured place in literature. While living in Logiealmond he studied the sturdy residents of the Glen with keen in-

sight and kindly sympathy, and with the hand of a true artist he has delineated their peculiarities. The character of the rural Scotchman has rarely had so true or so pleasing an interpreter. His quaint mingling of humor and pathos, of worldliness and other-worldliness, of stoicism and tenderness, has been set forth in a way that shows a master-hand. In *Auld Lang Syne* the Drumtochty people appear again, and they have a place in the affections of an ever-widening circle of readers.

The interest excited by these books has been rather quickened by the suspicion that they have in them what the Scotchman called "a dash o' heeresy." Some sober readers detected in them, as they thought, ominous omissions and suggestions of error. One of the vices of the religious novel is that it allows an author to conceal himself behind his characters. Through them he utters sentiments for which he need not assume responsibility. He may or may not endorse them. Ostensibly his attitude is that of the historian, and he is simply chronicling phases of belief; but in reality he may be a teacher in mask, seeking in this way to inculcate his own views. Another vice of the religious novel is that it may, and often does, make connections which are not true to life. In real life men do not "gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles," but in fiction they often do. The connection between creed and character, between character and conduct, is often purely arbitrary and widely different from what we find in living men and women. It must be confessed that Dr. Watson's stories are not altogether free from these faults, yet the charitable reader is disposed to allow some license to the novelist as to the poet, and to pardon an occasional divergence from strict orthodoxy, provided the story be a good one. But his late work, *The Mind of the Master*, is a purely didactic one, in which the author appears and speaks "in *propria persona*." We turn to it, therefore, with more assurance to find out his real position as a religious teacher.

The book is composed of fifteen essays upon the following topics: 1, Jesus, our Supreme Teacher; 2, The Development of Truth; 3, The Sovereignty of Character; 4, Ageless Life; 5, Sin an Act of Self-will; 6, The Culture of the Cross; 7, Faith the

Sixth Sense; 8, The Law of Spiritual Gravitation; 9, Devotion to a Person the Dynamic of Religion; 10, Judgment According to Type; 11, Optimism the Attitude of Faith; 12, Fatherhood the Final Idea of God; 13, The Foresight of Faith; 14, The Continuity of Life; 15, The Kingdom of God. The literary quality of these essays is high. The author shows that he is as much a master of pure English as of colloquial Scotch. Probably his most marked characteristic as a writer is his fondness for antithesis, which he often uses with fine effect. Take this, for example, from his chapter on the Sovereignty of Character, p. 51:

“Originality in literature is called discovery in science, and the lonely supremacy of Jesus rests not on what he said, but on what he did. Jesus is absolute Master in the sphere of religion, which is a science dealing not with intellectual conceptions but with spiritual facts. His ideas are not words, they are laws; they are not thoughts, they are forces. He did not suggest; he asserted what he had seen by direct vision. He did not propose; he commanded as one who knew there was no other way. One of his chief discoveries was a new type of character; his greatest achievement its creation.”

Or take the following contrast between Buddha and Christ, page 90:

“Buddha identified evil with the material influences of the body, as if a disembodied spirit could not be proud and envious. Jesus traced evil to the will, and ignored the body. Buddha proposes to train the soul by a life of meditation, as if inaction could be the nursery of character. Jesus insists on action, the most unremitting and intense. Finally, the great eastern sage held out the hope of escape from individual existence, as if that were the last reward for the tried soul. Our Master promised perfection in the kingdom of heaven. Both systems recognize the supreme need of the race, which is a favorable omen; they differ in the means of its relief. Buddhism amounts to the destruction of the disease and the extinction of the patient. Christianity compasses the destruction of the disease and the salvation of the soul. Tried by the severest test of a religion, Jesus alone out of all masters remains; he saves ‘his people from their sins.’”

Dr. Watson’s thinking is equal to his style. It is always vigorous, suggestive, and fresh, even though it may be lacking in accuracy. His spiritual tone, too, is exalted, and wins one’s sympathy even where there may be dissent from his reasoning.

The leading idea of the book, as might be inferred from its title, is set forth in the opening chapter on “Jesus, our Supreme Teacher.” In substance, it is an appeal from the creeds and confessions of the church, and even from the prophets and apostles to

Jesus as the one great, infallible teacher—“the one Judge of truth.” He amends Chillingworth’s famous definition of Protestantism after this wise: (P. 14.)

The religion of Protestants, or let us say Christians, is not the Bible in all its parts, but, first of all, that portion which is its soul, by which the teaching of prophets and apostles must itself be judged, the very words of Jesus.”

He claims that “we are living in a second Reformation,” which takes us back a step farther than the first. It has been discovered that “the water of life is clearer and sweeter from the spring than in a cistern,” and “the grass-grown path to the spring has been shown.” (P. 11.)

The same position he repeats in these words :

“What has to be laid down in the strongest terms and held in perpetual remembrance is that Jesus gave in substance final truth, and that no one, apostle or saint, could, or did add anything to the original deposit, however much he might expound or enforce it. . . . When any person imagines revelation in Holy Scripture as a level plain, wherein Abraham or St. Paul stands as high as Jesus, he gives one pause; when any person conceives of revelation as an ascending scale wherein the apostles stand above Jesus, he astounds one. If it be not an impiety, it is surely an extravagance.” (Pp. 30, 31.)

The Sermon on the Mount he regards as a complete summary of Christ’s teachings. Nothing essential has been omitted from it. He says: (P. 14.)

“When Jesus founded that unique society which he called the kingdom of God, and which we prefer to call the church, it was necessary he should lay down its basis, and this is what he did in the Sermon on the Mount. It was Christ’s manifesto and the constitution of Christianity. When Jesus opened his mouth his new society was in the air; when he ceased, every one knew its nature, and also on what terms a man might belong to it. . . . Among all the creeds of Christendom, the only one which has the authority of Christ himself is the Sermon on the Mount. When one reads the creed which was given by Jesus, and the creeds which have been made by Christians, he cannot fail to detect an immense difference, and it does not matter whether he selects the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession. They all have a family likeness to each other, and a family unlikeness to the Sermon on the Mount. They deal with different subjects; they move in a different atmosphere.”

He holds that they give different answers to the question, “What is a Christian?” Christ’s creed is ethical; those of the church metaphysical. His is concerned with the duties men owe to him and to each other; their’s with theories of his person, the na-

ture of his work, the condition of man, etc. Many persons who would pass as good Christians by the sermon are cast out by the creeds, and *vice versa*. He desiderates the time when a body of Christians will take their stand on the sermon of Jesus, and conceive their creed on his lines. He imagines it would run thus: "I believe in the Fatherhood of God; I believe in the words of Jesus; I believe in the clean heart; I believe in the service of love; I believe in the unworldly life; I believe in the beatitudes; I promise to trust God and follow Christ, to forgive mine enemies, and seek after the righteousness of God" "Who," he asks, "would refuse to sign this creed? They would come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, to its call." (P. 21.) In like manner in his chapter on the "Development of Truth" (pp. 35, etc.), he exalts the teaching of Christ above that of the apostles. "The relation of the apostles to Jesus," he admits, "is a question of great difficulty, which deserves careful treatment." He declines to class the apostles with the early Christian fathers, yet he is unwilling to admit them to the same plane of authority with Christ. He says: (P. 37.)

It must surely strike any one passing from the Gospels into the Epistles, and comparing the words of Jesus with the writings of St. Paul, that the apostle is less than his Master. It seems almost profanity to criticise St. Paul, but one may not make him equal to Jesus without removing Jesus from his judgment seat, and destroying the proportion of Holy Scripture. If one may be pardoned his presumption in hinting at any imperfections in the Apostle of the Gentiles, is not his style at times overwrought by feeling? Are not some of his illustrations forced? Is not his doctrine often rabbinical, rather than Christian? Does not one feel his treatment of certain subjects—say, marriage and asceticism—as somewhat wanting in sweetness? One only makes this rebate from the apostle's excellency in order to magnify the divinity of Jesus' evangel, which is never local, never narrow, never unintelligible; which is ever calm, convincing, human."

Again, in his chapter on The Kingdom of God, he says:

"The kingdom-idea flourishes in every corner of the three Gospels, and languishes in the Acts and Epistles, while the church-idea is practically non-existent in Jesus' sermons, but saturates the letters of St. Paul. . . . With all respect to the ablest Apostle of Jesus, one may be allowed to express his regret that St. Paul had not said less about the church and more about the kingdom." (P. 321.)

Such passages occur here and there throughout the book, and set forth what is really its underlying idea.

Now, in all this has our author correctly interpreted the mind of the Master?

1. First, as a preliminary suggestion, we question the conception which he has of the Sermon on the Mount, and the place which he assigns it in the teaching of our Lord. We surely do not disparage its divine wisdom and beauty when we insist upon confining it to the place in which the Master has put it, and using it only for the purpose for which he gave it. That sermon, as we understand it, was never intended to be the full and final evangel of Jesus—his gospel of grace for a world of sinners. It was spoken originally, not to a promiscuous multitude, but to the disciples. Matthew tells us (v. 1, 2) that "seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his *disciples* came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught *them*." His object was to explain to those who had already given him their allegiance the nature of the kingdom which he had come to set up, the principles upon which it is founded, its relations, its privileges and duties. As such it is perfect. But where is the hint that it contained all that guilty and ignorant sinners need to know in order to be saved? Did he not make a real addition to the sermon when, in his interview with Nicodemus, he taught the doctrine of the new birth as the great naturalization law of the kingdom of heaven; when he taught the necessity of his death in order that men might have life; and declared faith in himself as the one condition of eternal life? Our author is by no means the first who has sought to magnify the Sermon on the Mount out of the proportion of faith. Others have done so avowedly because the Pauline doctrine of the cross was an offence to them. But whatever the motive of the attempt, the result is to make the ground of our salvation ethical, instead of evangelical, a matter of works, not of grace.

2. Again, we cannot agree with much that Dr. Watson has to say as to the proper character and use of religious creeds. Indeed, his views on this subject seem confused and contradictory. He commands our fullest sympathy when he says (pp. 249-50), "What one thinks to-day he will do to-morrow; and the first equipment for living is a creed. No one is so simple that he

does not hold some article firmly he must have a belief as he must have a home. History proves the necessity of a creed; experience proves its effect. As the light of the sun colors the tiniest blade of grass, so the idea in the background of the mind tinges every detail of life. . . . The whole energy of a human life, however it may have been fed on the way, and whatever common wheels it may turn, arises from the spring among the hills. Belief gives the trend to politics, constitutes the rule of business, composes the atmosphere of the home, and creates the horizon of the soul. It becomes the sovereign arbiter of our destinies, for character itself is the precipitate of belief."

But he is not always true to this conception, either when criticising existing creeds or proposing ideals of his own. He seems at times to forget that creeds from their very nature are human productions. They are not handed down ready-made from heaven. Such is not God's way. He has revealed his truth in Scripture, as in nature, unsystematized—"by divers portions and in divers manners." It is left for us to search it out and set it in order. A man's creed is his interpretation of divine revelation; the response which his mind and heart make to what God has spoken. To speak of the Sermon on the Mount as a creed is to mistake the character both of the sermon and of a creed.

Again, creeds may properly differ from each other according as they are framed for different purposes. One may be intended to set forth the terms of salvation on the basis of Christian fellowship. Such a creed ought certainly to be short and simple, although we cannot agree that it may be purely ethical. Our Lord certainly was not indifferent to the views which men held as to his person. On one occasion he asked his disciples: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" And when he had heard their answer, he asked again: "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then he said to Peter: "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Again, he said to

the Jews: "If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins." Neither did he hold it of small moment what views men held as to their own condition. A difference of view on this point made the fundamental distinction between the Pharisee and Publican who went up to the temple to pray. A purely ethical creed might, indeed, be popular, and attract men from the east and west and north and south; but surely the value of a creed is not to be estimated by the number of signatures that may be obtained to it. Again, a creed may very properly have a much wider scope than to define the way of salvation or the basis of Christian communion. It may set forth the sum of Christian testimony—the whole body of truth which the church holds and teaches in her Master's name. Such a creed must necessarily be elaborate, covering the whole range of revealed truth. Nothing that God has revealed is unimportant. Every truth is not essential to salvation, yet it is essential to some good end, and may not be omitted from a man's belief without loss. In this sense a man's creed will expand as he is more and more "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"; and with such expansion of his creed there will be a corresponding growth in grace and enrichment of character.

3. But our gravest contention with Dr. Watson is when he disparages the teaching of prophets and apostles under the plea of exalting that of the Master himself. Here, let it be noted, the question is not as to the supremacy of Jesus as a teacher. This we contend for as earnestly as our author. But the question is as to the scope and methods of his teaching. Are we to confine the teaching of Jesus to the words which he spoke during his three years' ministry, as they are recorded in the four Gospels? Such seems to be the mind of Dr. Watson, but such, if we have understood him aright, is not the mind of the Master. In that memorable interview with his disciples in the upper room, on the night before his passion, he said (John xiv. 25, 26): "*These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*" There is a

plain promise that in addition to the personal instruction that he had given them they should be further taught, after his departure, by the Holy Spirit. Again, he says (John xvi. 12-15): "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." One marvels how, in the face of such a declaration, the claim can be made that Christ during his ministry in the flesh gave "final truth" to which no addition could be made. He expressly tells his disciples that because of their spiritual incapacity he was obliged to withhold many things which it was needful for them to know. Not a few things, but many; not things of secondary importance, but of highest moment. They were not yet in position to receive them. As Bernard says in his *Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, p. 95: "The presence of Christ in the flesh had been a help to what they had already learned; it was a hindrance to what they had now to learn. While he sat there before them in the body, it was hard to understand the mystery of a spiritual union. That hindrance is to be removed: 'It is expedient for you that I go away.'" They must cease to know him after the flesh in order that they might know him after the spirit. The meaning of the cross could only be fully unfolded after the Son of man had been lifted up. His priestly work of atonement and intercession, his spiritual union with his people, the Christian life of faith in the energy of the Holy Spirit, and a whole circle of related truths, could only be intelligibly expounded after Calvary and Pentecost had passed into history. These were the things which they could not bear while he was present with them. But they were not to be left in ignorance of them. He promises to continue their instruction through the agency of the Holy Spirit. His personal teaching must close; but another teaching was to be substituted which would also be his, and which would be better "suited to the new relations which he would bear to them in his glorified state." "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," "he will teach

you all things;” “he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you” These promises were not empty words; they were fulfilled in the preaching and writings of the apostles.

Accordingly, in his introduction to the “Acts of the Apostles,” Luke refers back to his Gospel narrative as a record “of all that Jesus *began*, both to do and teach,” plainly implying that the present treatise was to record what Jesus *continued* to do and teach. The worker, the teacher, is still the same, only his method has changed. He who spake on earth now speaks from heaven. He who wrought with his own hands and spake through his own lips is now to act and teach by his Spirit, though the hands, the hearts, and lips of chosen ambassadors. In perfect harmony with this is the claim which the apostles always make for themselves. In his speech before Agrippa, Paul states the commission which he received from Christ as an apostle in these significant words: “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, *and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.*” (Acts xxvi. 16.) To the Ephesians he says: “Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God given to me to you-ward; how that *by revelation he made known* unto me the mystery.” To the Galatians he says (chap. i. 11, 12): “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for *I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” And he does not hesitate to pronounce any man or angel accursed who should preach another gospel. In other of his epistles we find such expressions as these: “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord” (1 Thess. iv. 15.) “*I have received of the Lord* that which also I delivered unto you,” etc. (1 Cor. xi. 23.) “For I delivered unto you first of all *that which I also received.*” (1 Cor. xv. 1, etc.) Plainly he asserts the claim that he stood, in respect to the source of his information, on the same footing with the evangelists who walked with the Lord during his personal ministry, and recorded his words. In like manner John says in the beginning of his first epistle (chap. i. 3): “That which *we have seen and heard* declare we unto you.” And in the opening chapter of the Apoc-

alypse he tells us that the glorified Jesus appeared to him and laid his right hand upon him, and told him what to write. (Rev. i. 17) One is puzzled to understand why the beloved disciple should be a less trustworthy witness when he records what Jesus said in his hearing on the Isle of Patmos, than when he records the words of the same Jesus spoken in the upper room in Jerusalem.

To represent then, as our author does, that the teaching of the apostolic epistles is less authoritative than that of the four Gospels, is, we are constrained to say, a contradiction of the apostles themselves, and a palpable misinterpretation of the mind of the master. A sounder conclusion is that of Bernard in his comment on the Scripture: "Ye are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." "The corner-stone," he says, "is but part of the foundation, though it be the first and the chief part; and this consolidation of the corner-stone with the adjacent foundations, as one basement to sustain the building, exhibits in the plainest manner the fact that the church, *in respect of its faith*, rests upon a testimony which was delivered partly by Jesus Christ in person, and partly by the agents whom, for that purpose, he ordained. Their inspiration as believers associates them with the whole church; their inspiration as teachers unites them only with their Lord."

There are other things in Dr. Watson's book from which we strongly dissent, but to notice them would extend this critique beyond its proper limits. One lays down the volume with a high estimate of the author's gifts, and with gratitude to him for many fresh and suggestive views of religious truth; but with the conviction that, along with much that is precious and true, he teaches subtle and dangerous error; and with the hope that, like the gifted Apollos, he may, by some means, be taught "the way of God more perfectly."

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